

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 SAB-01 SY-05 OC-05

CCO-00 A-01 OPR-02 /091 W

----- 029860

O R 031347Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9867

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CIA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3935

STUTTGART FOR ELG

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEABNAESE SITUATION MAY 3: FIGHTING SUBSIDES AS LEFTISTS
EXTEND CEASEFIRE

REF: BEIRUT 3888 (020918Z MAY 76)

1. FIGHTING IN BEIRUT HAS SUBSIDED DURING PAST 24 HOURS, ALTHOUGH SHARP CLASHES STILL OCCUR IN PORT AREA AND SPORADIC FIRING IS AUDIBLE ELSEWHERE. THE DROP IN LEVEL OF VIOLENCE FOLLOWED ANNOUNCEMENT BY JUMBLATT'S LEFTISTS LATE YESTERDAY THAT THEY WOULD EXTEND THEIR CEASEFIRE, WHICH HAD ENDED "OFFICIALLY" APRIL 30. THE EXTENSION WAS WITHOUT TIME LIMIT.

2. OUR SOURCES CONFLICT ON EXTENT TO WHICH BATTLE LINES IN PORT HAVE CHANGED OVER PAST FEW DAYS. KATAEB DEFENDERS SEEM TO HAVE STAVED OFF CONCERTED LEFTIST/REJECTIONIST DRIVE TO CAPTURE MAIN PARTS OF HARBOR, BUT THEY MAY HAVE FALLEN BACK. SITUATION THERE REMAINS HIGHLY VOLATILE, AND IT IS NOT YET CERTAIN THAT EITHER ATTACKERS OR DEFENDERS ARE READY TO QUIT.

3. IN EXTENDING THEIR CEASEFIRE, LEFTISTS REITERATED TWO DEMANDS AGAINST SYRIANS. THEY INSISTED ON (A) WITHDRAWAL OF SYRIAN FORCES AND (B) ENDING OF ALLEGED SAIQA INTERVENTION IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. JUMBLATT'S MAIN WORRY AT PRESENT SEEMS CLEARLY TO BE SYRIAN INFLUENCE IN POLITICAL PROCESS, AN INFLUENCE SHOWN IN THE SUPPORT THAT SARKIS MUSTERED WITH SYRIAN HELP IN HIS CAMPAIGN LAST WEEK.

4. JUMBLATT IS NOT ALONE IN RESENTING SYRIAN HEAVY HAND. ONE INTERPRETATION OF SPEAKER ASAAD'S MOVE LATE LAST WEEK TOWARD AN UNNAMED "THIRD MAN" IS THAT MANY DEPUTIES FROM BEKAA VALLEY WHO HAD BEEN PRESSED BY SYRIA TO VOTE FOR SARKIS WANTED TO GET OUT FROM UNDER THIS PRESSURE. ASAAD'S MOVE ACCOMPLISHED THIS WITHOUT CONFRONTING DAMASCUS DIRECTLY. ON CHRISTIAN SIDE, DISLIKE OF SARKIS ON PART OF SOME CHAMOUNISTS HAS BEEN EVIDENT FOR SOME TIME. JUMBLATT SEIZED ON THESE SENTIMENTS WHEN HE DEMANDED AND WON POSTPONEMENT OF PARLIAMNETARY SESSION.

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5. HOWEVER, DAMASCUS IS STILL VERY MUCH IN THE PICTURE. A PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION UNDER AMIN AL-HAFEZ (A SUNNI WHO IS PROMINENT IN SPEAKER'S UNCOMMITTED BLOC) IS DUE TO GO TO SYRIA TODAY TO "EXPLAIN" THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE SESSION, WHICH SYRAIN MEDIA HAVE SHARPLY CRITICIZED. A HIGH-RANKING FEDAYEEN GROUP, POSSIBLY LED BY ARAFAT, MAY LIKEWISE GO TO DAMASCUS SHORTLY, WITH THE MISSION OF TRYING YET ANOTHER TIME TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN JUMBLATT AND THE SYRAIN LEADERS.

6. NOBODY AMONG THE COMPROMISE CANDIDATES HAS YET EMERGED AS CLEARLY LEADING THE FLOCK. RESPECTED DAILY "AN-NAHAR" SPECULATED TODAY THAT MICHEL AL-KHOURY IS GETTING THE MOST ATTENTION, BUT THERE IS NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF THIS. MARONITE LEADERS ARE MAKING NOISES PRIVATELY THAT THE COMPROMISE CANDIDATE SHOULD BE THEIRS TO PICK, SINCE JUMBLATT GOT HIS WAY ON POSTPONEMENT. WE EXPECT THE LEFTIST LEADER WILL HARDLY SEE IT THIS WAY AND WILL BLOCK ANY CHOICE TOO CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE KASLIK VIEWPOINT.

7. MEANWHILE, NEITHER MARONITE LEADERS NOR SYRIANS HAVE ABONED SARKIS, WHOSE CHANCES AT LEAST LOOK BETTER THAN EDDE'S, GIVEN SYRIA'S UNRELENTING VETO OF LATTER. YET BOTH DAMASCUS AND MARONITES HAVE PUT OUT SIGNALS THAT THE SEARCH FOR A THIRD MAN IS ACCEPTABLE APPROACH. CONSEQUENTLY, THAT IS THE GAME ALL SIDES ARE PLAYING FOR THE TIME BEING.
BROWN

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